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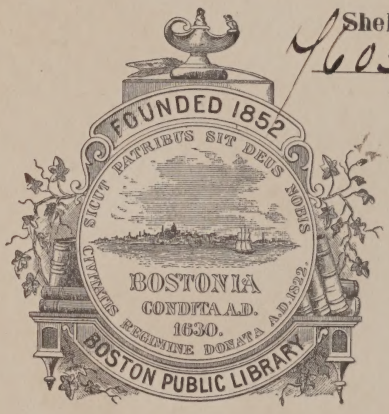

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SPIRITUALISM SHOWN AS IT IS!

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BOSTON COURIER REPORT

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

PROFESSED SPIRITUAL AGENTS AND MEDIUMS,

IN THE PRESENCE OF

PROFESSORS PEIRCE, AGASSIZ, HORSFORD, DR. B. A. GOULD, COMMITTEE, AND OTHERS,

AT THE

ALBION BUILDING, BOSTON,

ON THE 25TH, 26TH AND 27TH OF JUNE, 1857.

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

FOR SALE AT THE COUNTING-ROOM OF THE COURIER, OLD STATE HOUSE, AND BY PERIODICAL DEALERS GENERALLY. PRICE, 6 CENTS FOR SINGLE COPIES; $4 PER HUNDRED, CASH.

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BOSTON:

OFFICE OF THE BOSTON COURIER.

1859.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1858,

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BOSTON COURIER REPORT

OF

SPIRITUAL PROCEEDINGS.

42877

The following account of transactions occurring at a meeting held at the Albion in this city, on certain days of June, 1857, for the purpose of testing the pretensions of the Spiritualists, so called, is, in regard to all the facts stated, a transcript of minutes made upon the spot as the incidents themselves transpired. Most of the comments interspersed were also such as occurred and were noted at the time. It will be remembered that the meeting in question was arranged in consequence of an offer, made through the columns of the COURIER, of the sum of five hundred dollars, to be paid upon the satisfactory exhibition of any one of those more ordinary manifestations, such as table-tipping, &c., which mediums of every degree were constantly pretending to produce, and which were regarded by the believing public as among the most familiar and indisputable phenomena. This offer was accepted by Dr. H. F. Gardner, of Boston, on the part of the spiritual corps, and the money was deposited to await his order, conditionally on the success of the proposed experiments. The money, it may as well be said here, was never claimed by him. Certain referees, or committee-men, were mutually agreed upon between Dr. Gardner and the COURIER. These were Prof. Peirce, Prof. Agassiz, Prof. Horsford, of Harvard College, and Dr. B. A. Gould, residing in Cambridge, engaged in scientific pursuits. By agreement, also, a representative of the COURIER was to be present, and the writer of this narration was the party fixed upon. It was understood that, as would naturally be the case, every effort would be made by the Spiritualists to bring together the most celebrated and incontestable mediums throughout the whole country, though Boston and its vicinity were supposed to be the chief resort of the most famous among them; and in order that such an arrangement might be effected, all the time required by the spiritual agent was accorded, in one instance, I think, involving a deferral of the meeting for a week. He informed the Committee that he proceeded personally to summon these spiritual powers. A convenient apartment in the Albion building was selected by him, with the consent of the Committee, was entirely given up to him for such preparations as he saw fit to make, and was not the less under his control, that the lessee of the Albion, who also occupied apartments in the building, was himself a believer, to a greater or less extent, as soon appeared.

When all was ready, the first meeting was held at the rooms, in the forenoon of Thursday, June

25th, at 11 o'clock. The apartment was No. 12 in the Albion, corner of Tremont and Beacon streets. Before proceeding to business the committee assembled in the ante-room, for the purpose, it appeared, of asking some explanations from a person present, who was said to have served as some sort of agent between them and Dr. Gardner, while the arrangements were in progress. I also was there. Prof. Peirce, acting as chairman of the Committee, proposed certain enquiries to this individual, as to alleged spiritual objections to the room. Prof. P. said he wished to understand this matter fully beforehand. The Chairman enquired of this person, if he had not informed him that the room procured was, in the opinion of the spirits, unsuitable for their operations. The party interrogated replied, that he *thought* that it was unsuitable. Prof. P. reiterated his enquiry—Whether the messenger had not declared to him, that "fifteen spirits had been consulted, who were unanimous against the occupation of the room." The respondent said this was his opinion,—but all he knew about it he learned from Dr. Gardner. Prof. Peirce told the witness he had affirmed it to him as a fact—whereupon Dr. G. was called in, who, upon the question being proposed, denied that he had made any such statement, and declared the room was suitable—as indeed it might well be, having been selected and arranged by himself and his confederates.

Upon the settlement of this point we proceeded to the room, and found there present, for the Spiritualists, Dr. Gardner, Mr. Allen Putnam, of Roxbury, Mr. Alvin Adams, of Boston, a gentleman called Major Raines, of New York, (sent, we were told, by Judge Edmands,) Robert Carter, of Cambridge, Mrs. Brown and her sister, Miss Kate Fox, mediums, and Dr. Luther V. Bell, of Charlestown, whose relations to the matter were not understood. In the centre of the floor, occupying perhaps half its space, was a temporary board platform, (called by the Spiritualists a *sounding-board*,) raised on strips of pine two inches thick. Upon the centre of this platform was a slight pine table, about four feet square, of ordinary appearance, the legs rounded at the extremities. On the mantel-piece was a handsome collection of pine-apples, the use of which we subsequently learned. A "circle" was formed, Dr. Bell, Mr. Adams, the two ladies, and Major Raines, sitting around the table, with their hands or arms upon it, the others present occupying a sofa or chairs about the room. After sitting awhile, I heard slight, that is, faint, irregular taps, apparently on the *sounding-board*. It occurred to me at the time, and I made a minute of it, that though the sounding-board was evidently erected in order to produce a more distinct communication of sound, yet I could not see why *spirits* should need such appliances as these. The general term for the communicating spirits I found was "intelligences."

After some time *intelligences* were audibly and rather familiarly addressed by Dr. Gardner, to learn if the room was of the right temperature—answered by three very slight taps, signifying, as we were informed, assent. Much conversation among the whole company ensued. Mrs. Brown (of the Fox family) declared that sound, on other occasions, had touched her person often—it was a kind of elastic touch,—like an electric shock. Major Raines here explained the nature of the force—not very clearly,—nor, it would seem, very scientifically—though he had informed us that he came as a scientific man, because the agents here were ignorant persons. He said it was "a magnetic electric force, going out from the person, and imponderable; this force comes in contact with the inward faculties,—with the mind." This elucidation struck me as having a slight tendency to jumble incongruous elements; but I enquired if this force were *intelligent*, in reference to its answers to inquiry by means of taps. Upon some reflection, he said he supposed the spirits made use of this force, but did not explain the mode.

I had been much impressed with a statement of Mr. Allen Putnam, at one of the preliminary meetings of arrangement, at the house of Professor

Agassiz, Cambridge, as to the nature of this force. He informed us, that to some eyes it was visible. For instance: Judge Edmands had been able to distinguish it (as he said); it was a fluid, which pervaded the upper part of a room, descending to about the middle of the body of persons occupying the apartment. This seemed to me (if true) a very interesting and curious physical fact; since other fluids, entering any receptacle, according to the laws of gravitation, would first diffuse themselves over the floor or bottom of it, like a stream of water, for example, flowing into any basin, and then gradually rise, accordingly as the volume increased. To be sure, Major Raines told us the force was "imponderable,"—but then, if it had no substance whatever, which such a characteristic implies, the mystery would be,—how could it be visible? If "imponderable," so as to be thus lighter even than the "*viewless* couriers of the air,"—how could itself be seen? And how could anything so very thin, sublimated and unsubstantial be confined in space and assume distinct dimensions, however anomalous? If, on the other hand, it were visible, it could be so only in consequence of its subjection to the laws of nature, shown clearly by its mingling with nature. In this case, having greater density than the atmosphere, as it necessarily must have in order to be seen, it must also necessarily occupy a lower stratum than the atmosphere, instead of a higher, and would have pervaded the apartment from the floor, not from the ceiling. And thus it follows that, if seen, it could not have been seen in the position described by Judge Edmands.

This demonstration also conflicts, I fear, with the elucidatory theory of Major Raines. We weigh even the atmosphere, which is not seen; this fluid, therefore, if to be seen, cannot be "imponderable." These are philosophical difficulties unsolved, perhaps insoluble. There are certain things, the Apostle informs us—and I trust it is not irreverent for me to allude to the point in this connection—which "the natural man receiveth not—neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned.*" Now, the ex-judge, though assuming to have intercourse with a certain order of spirits, and being certainly in an abnormal condition, is clearly not spiritual, in the sense intended by St. Paul. But this visionary spectacle he professes (by the statement of Mr. Putnam) to have beheld, and of course with his mortal eyes, —which cannot be, unless he has the hardihood to contradict the Apostle, — because, according to him, the things of the spiritual world are only "spiritually discerned."

I observe the sounds increase in number and power, (though never remarkably loud) just in proportion as general conversation is going on, or when the attention of the Committee is apparently diverted. Finally, the ladies stood, one on a chair and the other on a stool, when slight taps occurred in their immediate neighborhood. The *intelligences* were enquired of, if they would not rap ten times; there was no reply; some conversation took place, and after a short interval, perhaps half a minute, ten faint raps were given. They were then asked to rap six times—there was a good deal of local talking amongst those present, and in the midst of this six raps like the others were given. Thus the rapping spirits, though with a feebleness quite worthy of compassion, supposing them honest, seemed disposed to do all they could; but, during this session, no other experiments or rappings were given.

In the afternoon, the company was sitting as before—that is, the ladies, Dr. Gardner and Dr. Bell at the table. Irregular raps took place—one, two and three—at intervals; all these, like the others, were on the sounding-board. Inquiry was made if many spirits were present; this was answered by three taps, furnishing, it was said, an affirmative reply. Prof. Peirce asked if any friend of his was present; the answer, in the same way, was "yes;" he asked if the spirit would give his name, but to this question there was no reply. "Circle" was then formed; an extension table, ten feet long, was put up; all present were in the circle but Mr. Agassiz and the writer of this;

Mrs. Brown was at one end, Miss Fox at the other. There were rappings, at Mrs. Brown's end of the table evidently. I inquired if the spirits would rap in the centre of the table, but they did not. (In the forenoon I had also requested that we might have some rappings while every one was off the sounding-board; but they did not try.) Prof. Horsford and Dr. Gould now put inquiries of various kinds to the intelligences; sometimes they got taps, sometimes none at all; the replies, if intelligible, were not communicated to the company. There was complaint, on the part of the spiritualists, that the *replies were confused.* Dr. Gardner explained this by saying, that he "thought they might be deceptive spirits, disposed to make sport of us." A part of this seemed likely, for certainly they sometimes gave the signal that they would answer, and yet they did not—lying spirits, evidently.

Mrs. Brown complained that the manifestations did not amount to much, and we did not investigate the matter, as she had been accustomed to be examined; she said there were "resisting influences," with other observations to the same purport. No manifestations occurring, it was proposed to enquire of the spirits if any one present resisted, and who it was. They were enquired of in regard to us *seriatim*, applying the question as to each person present; they indicated no one. Mr. Agassiz and I, who had been sitting out, now proposed to leave the room for awhile, in order to give the spirits a fair chance, in case they might have been mistaken as to our resistance, and we did so; we stayed some twenty minutes, and were then called in; there had been no further manifestations. The ladies now mounted the sofa, and *holding their hands on the wall,* some slight taps were noticed, in answer to enquiries; the sound could not be perceived by me when there was any noise in the street, (we were up three flights) but was distinct, though faint, when it was still. I thought little of this, because, in the forenoon, Miss Fox tried to produce sounds on a large pine box in the room, standing elevated on posts, and when I put my ear to the opposite corner, she produced no raps, as she admitted; others, before this, had perceived them; and yet Mr. Clark, assistant to Mr. Agassiz, after Miss Fox had turned away, asked me to put my ear to the box, and did produce very distinct raps. by some means which I did not observe, though looking at him, as I had also looked at Miss Fox. Mr. Clark told me he did it easily with his knuckles, so as not to be detected. Mr. Agassiz declares the taps are produced by the bones of the feet, which some have the power to employ in this way. It seems a trick, at best, and, so far as I have seen, quite unworthy of any respectable spirits. Adjourned to half-past ten o'clock tomorrow.

Friday morning, June 26th, 10½ o'clock. Assembled. One leaf was taken out of the extension table by Dr. Gardner—the same that was used yesterday afternoon. At the table were Messrs. Peirce, Gould, Bell, Gardner, Raines, Adams, Putnam, Huntington (lessee of Albion), Carter, Redmond (medium). After sitting about half an hour, Redmond inquired if spirits would tap for us; no response; in five minutes some thought a faint sound was heard. Redmond *asked the company,* if it was not the spirits; *they* thought it was some foot accidentally moved. After a little time, Dr. Gardner suggested that he and Redmond should go into the ante-room to inquire into the reason of our difficultes; they went, and as it seemed to me very absurdly, took the small table with them, as if it were either oracular tripod or other necessary instrument of incantation. In a few minutes Dr. Gardner reported, that the *spirits said they could not do anything, as outside influences absorb and control the force.* I inquired, *how* this communication was made, and was informed it was in writing—which spiritual chirography, strange to say, seeing it was such solemn means of spiritually-communicated intelligence and developed a fact of so much interest and importance, had been rather negligently left in the other room (Dr. Gould has it, but

any person might have written it). The spiritualists urge Mr. Agassiz and myself to go into the circle, which we peremptorily decline to do. Then Dr. Gardner and Redmond go out again and are absent just three minutes, by the watch. They report the intelligences to say, that they cannot operate with Mr. Redmond alone—but with him, and other mediums in concert with him, they think they can. (This is a singular variation from their declaration made so little time before). We adjourn to the afternoon with this understanding.

Met at 4 P. M. Dr. Gardner reduced the table, by taking out two leaves, making it circular, and about four feet in diameter; and really, as yet, this solemn, though rather mechanical than supernatural enlargement and then again reduction of tables, has constituted all the prominent manifestations we have had. The doctor also brought in the original square pine table and duly placed it on the sounding-board. At this were seated Mr. Mansfield, Mrs. Kendrick, mediums, Mrs. Mansfield, Prof. Peirce, Dr. Bell, Mr. Adams, Mr. Putnam. Redmond was not present, the doctor announcing to the company that he deprived us of his presence "at the request of spirits." The circle was formed at 10 minutes past 4; ten minutes elapsed, yet there were no manifestations. Prof. Horsford put a sealed envelope on the table; Mr. Mansfield passed his fingers nervously over its surface for a few minutes; nothing came of it; and I am as ignorant now of the contents of that epistle as I was before it was written. Mr. M. now changed places with Mr. Putnam, so that the two mediums, Mansfield and Mrs. Kendrick, were sitting side by side. Another sealed envelope was put upon the table; Mansfield examines it, his fingers trembling, but says nothing; then there was low conversation between him and Mrs. Kendrick; she manifests herself; scrawls in an agitated manner on half a sheet of paper with a pencil, apparently four unintelligible words; she is unable to tell what they are, or what they mean, (this surely is a great phenomenon); soon there is another scrawl—four words, largely written, above each other, looking something like the preceding forms, but equally unintelligible to her and to all; nobody can read a syllable of either. Fifteen minutes to five o'clock, and no manifestations. The mediums repair to the ante-room to enquire; they take the round pine table with them; they are absent forty minutes; and then Mansfield comes back and reports that they can do nothing to-day—they have no control of the influences. Dr. Gardner says, when those who were unbelievers were not there, they could *make the table move around the room*—though, in the course of the day he had intimated that the difficulty *might be in the atmosphere*. I had conversation with one of the chief believers (Mr. A.) who sat near me on the sofa. He remarked that he supposed I was an unbeliever. I said "yes, I disbelieved it altogether." He said he had been engaged in the matter for five years; he thought little of the physical manifestations, but had derived great pleasure from the spiritual communications, that is, the things written. He rejected, therefore, the evidence which really affects the crowd, through deception of the senses, but believes in ridiculous forgeries which impose on the imagination. I told him I thought it all a gross illusion, and in every way pernicious in the extreme. An adjournment soon took place until to-morrow morning.

Saturday morning, at 10½ o'clock, assembled again. Major Raines appears no more; after his first scientific explanation, he had afforded us no further light. ("O, star-eyed Science!") When we entered, we found the mediums were in the ante-room, pretending to consult the *intelligences*: they came in at 11, with the extension-table reduced to its circular form; four mediums were present, Mansfield, Mrs. Kendrick, Redmond, and an Englishman, one Capt. Ayling. The latter I had not seen before, and upon enquiry of a learned professor who he was, he pronounced him rather emphatically, "that —— jackass, Hedgcock's Quadrant,"—which struck me as a highly figurative mode of description for a per-

sonality,—but, if a "medium," I bethought me, then also an *instrument*. The odds and ends of all things seemed promiscuously brought together in this company. The Captain, upon being enquired of by some one, said he never knew he was a medium until he came to Boston. I do not wonder that the demonstrator of the quadrant should have made this discovery, though late. These four mediums sat around the table; there was low, occasional conversation between them, and a good deal of covert smiling at each other across the table, which seemed rather merry for persons inviting spirits. Their hands lay on the table with the palms downwards; they finally touch fingers; a generally dead silence prevailed; but there was occasional whispering at the table, and smiling at each other, and sometimes a "manifestation" of quiet laughing. The whole seemed disgusting, and I could not wonder that the spirits would not come. At 20 minutes past 11, not a rap. Dr. Gardner, in some flutter, consults with the mediums in a low voice; enquiry was made by Professor Horsford if they cannot pick names out of paper pellets; Redmond says, "No—not till we get manifestations." Mansfield leaves the table; nothing comes; Redmond leaves, and Mansfield takes his place; still nothing; Redmond and Adams go into the anteroom to see if they can procure manifestations; the door was shut; we hear two crashes and some other movements there; no report: 11½ o'clock, still nothing; the mediums at the table seem discouraged; Mrs. Kendrick droops, looks cheap and gapes; Capt. Ayling turns away; Mansfield scrabbles a little with pencil on paper; shows nothing; in about ten minutes there is report from the anteroom that nothing can be done, because of outside influence. Dr. Gardner *says*, the crash we heard was the table lifted; (Great is Diana of the Ephesians!)

Conference is now held in ante-room between Committee, Dr. Gardner and myself; Prof. Agassiz tells the doctor we have had nothing but a few raps easily made; all can be done better by Prof. Peirce. Dr. Gardner admits there have been no raps, except about the persons of the mediums, (the Foxes) or on places which they touched; thinks he will bring six mediums in the afternoon, and hopes to get raps in other parts of the room. This looks formidable, at least in numbers. At this conference Dr. Gardner, addressing me, said, —"I understand you believe in the Devil." My reply was that "I had no doubt about that;" as indeed I had not, seeing there is as much reason to believe in the *personality* of evil spirits, as of good; without which, indeed, such creatures could not be; and if in the personality of spirits, which his own theory necessarily admitted,—then, that there should be different degrees of capacity and power among them, as among men, and that some might be more capable of mischief than others, and one superior to them all, was no such very violent hypothesis; indeed, only conformable to all the analogies of heaven and earth, as well as expressly assumed and declared in Scripture, from one end of it to the other. I did not go into this reasoning with the doctor; but did intimate that, whatever my belief on this point might be, it had not struck me that anything implying the intervention of superhuman agencies had occurred at our sessions. Whereupon the doctor, referring to the fact that he had been very active in promoting the cause of spiritualism, made that remarkable speech "that, if spiritualism was not true, then *he had shovelled thousands into hell*, for he had *drawn multitudes away from the churches*." It was upon this day also, I think, that I inquired for what purpose those tempting pine-apples were kept upon the mantel-piece, which, however, had sensibly diminished in numbers, and was informed that they *were eaten by the spirits*—which brought at once to my memory the story of Bel and the Dragon, in the Apocrypha.

We met again at 4 o'clock, P. M. Dr. Gardner informs us, that Mrs. Brown is indisposed, and Miss Fox cannot come without her; the presumption seemed very strong that the doctor, in conferring with them may have let them learn the views

of the committee on the subject of their rappings, and also his own admissions that these amounted to nothing. At 4½, P. M., two of the committee leave to keep another engagement in the city, promising to return, on the instant, if sent for, in case any manifestations took place. The probability of such phenomena may be judged of, after such futile sessions for three days. In fact, the whole thing seemed excessively silly, as it had really become inexpressibly tedious. Nevertheless, the four forenoon mediums took their places at the table; as soon as they were seated, and without any previous intimation, Mansfield said —"No, we wont have a circle;" there was a slight dispute between him and Dr. Gardner, because he had not said so before the "circle" was formed; indeed, the doctor had told us, in the forenoon, that the mediums were mulish and unmanageable. The circle, however, was formed; all join it, but Dr. Gould, Mr. Clark, the assistant of Prof. Agassiz, and myself. Dr. Gardner wished us to come in; he addressed me particularly, saying, no little to my astonishment and confusion of face, that I "exert great influence."

I modestly intimated that I did not count myself able to control all the spirits in existence; that I only wished to look calmly and carefully on, and so see what was to be seen. After sitting a moment, the doctor rose with some heat, and declared that they could do nothing under these conditions—which struck me as singular, since they had not tried. The circle was then broken; the doctor admits that nothing can take place, if we sit out; and there is some conversation about an evening meeting. Upon an intimation that some one would come with me in place of Mr. Agassiz's assistant, Dr. Gardner objects, urging the agreement, which was that the writer in the Boston Courier should be present with a single friend. I reply that it has been so; I represent the writer in the Courier, and propose to come with only one friend; doubtfully urge that I am not confined to the same person every day; he says he shall not be willing that any other shall come with me; then says he does not know whether he shall object or not; can tell if he sees him; again declares they can do nothing, as things are, (the resisting forces are so powerful) which again reminds me of that logical answer to the inquiry in the Irish song:

Says he—"Can you play on this pipe? there's but few play"—
Says I,—"I don't know, for I never did try."

We adjourned to meet at 8 P. M.

At the appointed hour we met. Dr. Morrill Wyman accompanies me, and no objection is made; present, besides ourselves, the Committee, Dr. Gardner, Dr. Bell, Messrs. Adams, Huntington, Carter, Putnam, and Redmond, (who is now sent off "by request of Committee,") a certain Davenport and his two boys, who are to produce manifestations in the box already mentioned, which had been all the time of our sessions mysteriously in the room. It was of rough pine, large enough to permit the boys to sit upright upon a bench which went around the interior, and having a large door in front, with a bolt upon the inside. We were told that, as soon as the lights are put out, the door of the box will be shut and bolted, although the boys are securely fastened within; and the spirits will untie the boys, tie them as we may, and will play on various musical instruments. I confess the experiment would seem more satisfactory to me, if the instruments should be played upon to any tune, and it should be found, on opening the door, that the boys still remained securely tied. This might be difficult to account for. However, we urge that one of the Committee shall be allowed to go into the box with the boys; after some consultation they consent. The boys took their place, and were carefully tied with stout cords by direction of the Committee, that is, by Prof. Horsford and Dr. Wyman, Dr. Gould and I assisting. The cords were passed as tightly as could be without hurting them around their wrists, which were also tied together; their ancles were similarly fastened, and the cords were then brought up over

heir chests, carried through holes just above their shoulders, were knotted outside, and the ends carried back, through other holes, into the box; then Dr. Wyman tied together the cords which fastened the wrists, with thread. Prof. Peirce entered the box and took his seat on the back side of it, between the boys, they sitting at each end facing each other. The Professor gathered, at once, all the musical instruments, consisting of two tambourines, a fiddle, a banjo and a tin horn, between his legs.

It was an uncommonly striking spectacle; and to one not seriously anticipating the solemnities of spiritual manifestations, amusing, as I fear some of us were graceless enough to consider it. As it was, the scene was one not easily to be forgotten. It was a night of June, intensely hot; the windows were shut, and every ray of light had been carefully excluded by close-hangings of green stuff fastened upon them. Before the last jet of gas was turned off, the aspect of Prof. Peirce, looking out from the shadows of his tabernacle, with the spiritual youngsters on each side of him, and vigilantly guarding the implements which were soon to be toned by the supernatural orchestra, was something truly pictorial to behold. It was impossible that there should not be some excitement, as well as a great deal of discomfort; for we could not tell how far practice and darkness might combine in some way to cheat our senses. We stood silently fronting the box, reluctantly yielding the Professor to his fate; the light is extinguished; we listen breathlessly; the door is *not* shut. The silence continued for perhaps ten minutes; there was no manifestation; the gas was re-lighted, and Prof. Peirce came safely forth. (*Ohe! jam satis!*)

After a little interval, allowing the boys to occupy the box, this time, by themselves, the lights were again put out. Profs. Agassiz and Horsford, Dr. Wyman and myself join hands in a semi-circle around the box; the door is *not* shut. After a little while, one of the boys, addressing, as we understood, the spirit of the box, familiarly says—"John, will you manifest yourself?" No reply. Again, in a minute or two,—"John, will you play on the fiddle?" No reply. Soon afterwards, one of the boys cried out—"My hands are untied"—and here the remark is perhaps superfluous, that to stop here necessarily excluded spirits and was conclusive evidence that the *boy* could get no farther, by reason of the cords over his chest, which prevented his stooping down to untie his feet. This also prevented his reaching the musical instruments, which consequently gave no sound. Upon this exclamation, the gas was relighted; examination was made; the cords were off his hands on the floor of the box; the knots were untied; the other boy remained as before. But we find the *thread broken* and its knots still fast; the spirits, therefore, had to *break* the thread; they could not untie its knots. This was enough; the portentous box demonstration, of we know not what spiritual music, had reduced itself to the not very remarkable feat of a boy slipping his hands out of cords around his wrists, untying the knots, and stopping there, becase he could not reach the other fastenings. We leave with little ceremony, declaring it conclusive; the Spiritualists hang their heads and make no reply; Dr. Bell comes out with us and pronounces it an unsuccessful trick. Thus ended the session. Nothing was done, by the most famous mediums which could be collected, in the country, far and near, except a little rapping by the Foxes, easily traceable to their persons and easily done by others without the pretence of spirits; not a table or piano lifted or anything moved a single hair's breadth; not a bell rung, nor an instrument played upon; nor any phenomenon or manifestation exhibited or even attempted. So ends this ridiculous and infamous imposture.

If, therefore, upon such a trial, at a meeting held under the most favorable circumstances,—with a pecuniary stake depending, of value enough, that we cannot suppose operators who exhibit for a dollar or two to be indifferent to it,—and with every opportunity, means and motive to do their best,—the spiritualists actually did nothing—the

inference seems inevitable to a rational mind, that upon other occasions, nothing to sustain their spiritual pretensions could have been done, and therefore that nothing was done. This conclusion reason inexorably demands. Must we not, then, receive testimony? Not always. Those accustomed to weigh it, cannot believe that species of it, however or by whomever offered, which requires them to sacrifice the fair exercise of their reasonable faculties for its acceptance. Nor such testimony in such a case. The senses themselves, in circumstances like these, are often the falsest of all witnesses. Let the imagination once become heated, and where is that consciousness of our faculties, which leaves us judgment, discrimination, self-control? And when thus entangled, the propensity to self-deception and the motives to deceive others are quite too strong, to entitle revelations of the nature referred to to be estimated by the ordinary rules of human evidence.

Besides, it will be found that, frequently at least, those who fall into this delusion, or who think there may be something in it,—if not avowed sceptics, which oftentimes they are, are persons who have no real sense of religious truth. Led by vague or morbid curiosity, and under the excitement of imagination, they readily take up with this error, because they do not perceive truth. They welcome a lower and incomplete form of demonstration, because their minds have not yet been able to grasp a higher and perfect form. Not only in this respect but in many others, such persons will often be, of all others, the most superstitious. They claim to reject absolute realities, because they do not see evidence of them satisfactory to their minds; but there is something monstrous in the pitch of their credulity about things unreal, of which there is no evidence whatever. They remind one of the account of an atheist, given, I think, in Lord John Russell's "Recollections of Moore"—"Why," said the person speaking of him, "his *faith* is perfectly astonishing; he actually believes that all this creation exists without any cause!" The disposition, therefore, which substitutes this sort of credulity for faith, and finds in it what it calls religion, so far from being any mark of spiritual-mindedness, will be found to result from real confusion of the intellectual, is not of the moral perceptions.

This relation has been hitherto kept back by me, out of deference to the distinguished committee, which, it is understood, has been engaged, as occasion offered, in the preparation of a formal report upon the subject, entering at large upon the philosophy of "Spiritualism," and based upon the history of the infatuation, as it has exhibited itself in this and other countries, both before and since the meetings at the Albion. When their solemn award against the claims of the spiritual pretenders was adjudged, no particular time was indicated by the committee for making their final report. Brief as were the terms of that award, its statement and the warning it contained have proved a fatal obstacle to the spread of this delusion, especially among those classes of the community generally counted intelligent, both in this neighborhood and elsewhere. But in the meantime very extensive opportunities have occurred to witness its various phases, and to observe how it has been made the means and instrument of the most immoral and licentious purposes. It is believed that the committee, desiring to perform their duty in as thorough and effectual a manner as possible, has not been unobservant of any of the facts or tendencies of this wide-spread and "strong delusion," sensibly checked as it undoubtedly was, both as a matter of belief and of practice, by their former action in the premises. Spiritualism, since then, though hundred-headed, has been gradually but surely dying out. But at no distant date, it is hoped, the public will obtain in their report, a general view of the imposture, an explanation of the causes of its prevalence, and a history of its rise and *fall*. In the meantime, neither has the committee, or any one of its members ever seen the present narration, or known anything about its contents or nature. But cer-

tain recent developements have induced me now to print this relation, to aid in the further exposure of this preposterous implement of deception, without reference to the future action of the committee, and in the trust that it may prove of service to the public welfare.

I will only say, in conclusion, that I have understood it to have been alleged by certain of the leading spiritualists, present at the Albion, that those of us who refused to sit around the table, at our sessions, were influenced by sentiments of personal apprehension—in fact, that we were, in their language, "afraid to go into the circle!" What special danger to ourselves we might have reasonably anticipated from spirits, with which those around us professed to hold such very familiar, not to say, controlling and even patronizing intercourse,—and over which some of us were told we had such great power; and whose slightest intervention from beginning to end we were informed, was prevented by a "resisting force," on our part, which never amounted to anything more than indifference and contempt,—it seems difficult to imagine. And why we should be more reluctant to sit around an ordinary-looking table, than at a little distance from it,—except that the table and those about it being thus in full view, our eyes would better serve us to discern what was going on, beneath it or upon it, in every part, I think it unnecessary to suggest. But making no pretensions whatever to more than usual nervous impassibility or moral resolution, there are certain things of which I have no objection to say that I am afraid. I trust I am afraid to do anything deliberately, which would lessen my self-respect, —afraid of too intimate association with those, whom I do not conceive deserving of respect,— afraid of disobeying the instincts of my understanding,—afraid of violating the manifest law of God. I have never ceased to consider what was *professed* and *pretended* by the spiritualists as impious—what was *performed* by them as puerile. If the manifestations claimed by them, as within their power, actually corresponded with their pretensions, I should have no hesitation in ascribing them to diabolical agency; since, if the spirits were their agents, it is obvious they are engaged in occupations—how different from those of pure intelligences, which stand in the presence of an infinitely wise, holy and omnipotent Being! How different from the employments imputed to the spirits of just men made perfect, by the Scripture which is the rule of faith to every Christian man. Whether true or false, therefore, such phenomena might be, I have always regarded all spiritualistic experiments as equally criminal,—since they tampered or attempted to tamper with things beyond the plain revealed path of human duty, as well as human experience; and were equally in contradiction, therefore, to our natural moral sense, and dangerous to our understanding and its discipline for good or evil purposes,—which we may ourselves control, or else give up to the abuses of the most pernicious weaknesses and superstitions.

Still I must here put in a *caveat*, by repeating again that nothing was done at these sessions, implying the intervention of spirits, either bad or good, or showing the exercise of anything but the most lamentable human weakness and folly, supposing it were possible that any of the operators could believe in themselves.

With these views, I have uniformly abstained from all intercourse with spiritualistic circles, and, excepting on the recent occasion, have never attended upon any experiment whatever. I have constantly expressed to such personal friends and associates as were more or less implicated in these matters, the opinions now presented, and where I felt myself entitled to do so, have never failed to warn them of the evil moral, intellectual and physical consequences of such proceedings. I felt great hesitation about being present, on the occasion and under the circumstances described. But as soon as the matter was proposed to me, upon the reflection of a few moments, I conceived it my duty to yield all scruples, since this seemed to me an appeal of duty not to be withstood; and since

I entertained the utmost confidence, that, through the intelligent intervention of a committee so competent and experienced, and by means of such influences as were thus brought to bear upon the subject, the whole series of false pretences, by which the public had been so miserably deluded, might be completely detected and exposed, as most assuredly it was.

Many may think it an evidence of candor, on my part, to say that I really expected, inexperienced in these matters as I was, to see something which it might be difficult to understand and account for. This expectation soon vanished, and was replaced by astonishment that persons reputed intelligent could be imposed upon by operations so trickish, so trustless, so shallow,—and by a sense of degradation at finding myself a participant in performances styled spiritual, and for the exhibition of which pretended spirits were invoked, which seemed to me only beneath reason and common sense,—at once childish and ridiculous; debasing the intellect; demoralizing every honest sentiment; perilling the soul; reducing all things, human and divine, to the paltry standard of pigmies and automatons, instead of holding to one worthy of men, and which belongs to and is the privilege of earth, in its legitimate relations with heaven.

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